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BY SIMON NEWCOMB, LL.D.

"THE greatest nation is the one that can send most men to the top of the Matterhorn." This reply to the question which we should deem the greatest nation was probably regarded by the guests who heard it as a euphonious paradox, rather than a serious opinion. And yet, if not taken too literally, it suggests a direction in which progress is now tending. With the decay of asceticism, naturally commences the growth of the opposite idea, embodied in the familiar phrases, "muscular Christianity" and "the physical basis of life." This idea is supported by modern physiological investigation, which brings out in clear relief that physical health and vigor are qualities to be cultivated, not merely from a selfish desire for amusement and to secure freedom from pain, but as a means toward the attainment of our highest ethical ends. Experience shows the general rule to be that the physically lazy man is not apt to be mentally active, though the mentally active man may be so absorbed in his work as to have little time or energy to spend in outdoor exercise. The names of the few hundred persons who, since Whympers's memorable and disastrous adventure, have ascended the Matterhorn, would be more than a miscellaneous list of people endowed with bodily vigor and a propensity to

climb. They would include a President of the United States, a goodly list of leaders in science and literature, and more than a due proportion of men who have made their mark in various fields of effort. The general trend of evidence recently collected by students of hygiene is toward the view that there is something toxic in the air of even the best houses, and that he who would command the best measure of physical health must, so far as he can, live and sleep in the open air. He cannot do this well unless he is in motion during most of his waking hours; and in this we have a completely rational incentive to bodily exercise.

Having said this by way of preface, let us proceed to our task. We wish to bring about peace and amity between lusty Ajax, who attends all the football games, admires the manly qualities there displayed, and sees in the actors the men who are to do the real work of the world—and wise Minerva, who has learned that brain and not muscle does the world's work, and that the best physical health and mental vigor are quite compatible with inability to climb a hill or fight a burglar. We fancy that the goddess is already beginning to ply us with questions, whether we are not confounding causes and effect, whether men do not play football because they are already strong and active, rather than the reverse, whether the qualities they display in the game are really those most required by modern society, and whether Whympster would not have done as good work, and Leslie Stephen become as effective a writer, if neither of them had ever seen a mountain. But, with all the deference due her sex, we shall ask her to postpone her questions, and remain a spectator while Ajax has his innings.

The world, he tells us, has no need of the weakling, who shrinks from personal combat, and is disturbed by the fear of a little physical pain and discomfort. The man who in the future is to win the admiration and command the respect of his fellow men by his works must possess the robust qualities of the body, as well as the finer qualities of the intellect. In no way are such qualities more readily acquired and displayed than in the roughest of the games played by university students in intercollegiate contests. The large majority of men who are to be leaders in this and the next generation will be trained at colleges and in universities. It is essential to their efficiency that they shall not be mere scholars and bookworms, but physically strong and cou-

rageous, ready to sacrifice ease and comfort to the exigencies of their work. Therefore, let them engage in manly contests, the rougher the better.

Now, dear Ajax, I am delighted that you take this ground. I take much the same view as you do, though I might state our case a little differently. We wish the men of our nation to be capable of carrying on great works. The best and most effective work cannot be done unless the doer enjoys good physical health. Human experience, as a whole, shows that life and motion in the open air are among the agents most conducive to vigor. Let us, therefore, cultivate this life in the nation at large, especially in that fraction of it which is to take the lead. Open-air games are an excellent means toward this end, therefore we wish to encourage them. I look for your cordial assent to my statement of the problem before us, which is to devise that course of action best adapted to imbue our intellectual young men with a warm love for the green fields, the blue sky and the varied beauties of nature, and such a fondness of physical movement that they shall look forward with pleasure many months in advance to the moment when they can escape from their daily routine, to engage in country walking or in mountain-climbing. Let us now put our heads together, and map out the course of action best adapted to our purpose. To do this we must begin with a survey of the situation, and study the problem which it offers from our point of view.

A body of several hundred young men enter college. The first step in deciding how to secure them the full measure of the manly qualities we admire will be to classify them as to their present possession of such qualities. We divide them into three groups. At the head will be the vigorous and courageous young men, already possessing in the highest degree the manly qualities we desire to cultivate. Born of strong and healthy parents, they have loved the outdoor air from childhood, and have played on the teams of their respective schools till they have reached the college age. If any of us can claim them as children or grandchildren, we are glad to do so.

The second and much larger group will comprise a middle class, possessing fair or excellent health, and a due amount of every manly quality, but taking no special pleasure in bestowing their car-fares upon the shoemaker, more interested in study

than in sport, and fonder of seeing others lead the strenuous life than of leading it themselves.

The third will take in the weaklings; the men who shrink from strenuous physical effort, are not strong enough to engage in a rough-and-tumble game, fear they would get hurt if they tried, will not incur even a slight risk of a few bruises without some more serious reason than love of excitement, deem it the part of wisdom to go through life with a minimum of physical pain, and prefer a sphere of activity in which the sacrifice of comfort will be as small as possible. Perhaps many of them watch the games with as much eagerness as any of their fallows, and hurrah for their teams as loudly as their weak lungs will permit. But this adds little to their physical vigor.

Having these three groups before us, the problem is so to deal with and train them that, taken as a whole, the best results at which we aim shall be reached. Keeping in our mind's eye the respective needs of the groups, our policy is obvious. The first group already possesses, in as high a degree as society demands, all the manly qualities we wish. It goes without saying that we need not greatly concern ourselves with it. The second admits of improvement, and may therefore command a share of our attention. But it is the third group which stands most urgently in need of our help and encouragement. One of the strongest reasons for devoting especial attention to it is that the conditions of modern society are extremely favorable to its increase. What would we do to-day if, like our forefathers, we had no street-cars? An evolutionary philosopher has predicted that, at some future epoch, the human being will be an animal unable to use his legs except to mount into an automobile, or incapable of chewing with his own teeth. We desire to postpone this epoch, if possible, to some future geological age. To do this, we must evidently deal with the group of university students that is in most danger of being the progenitors of such an enfeebled race. In a word, athletic exercises are to be promoted with most care and attention in the third group, and with less in the second, while the first may be safely left to take care of itself. The ideal stage of intercollegiate athletics is, then, one in which the teams are made up of the weakest men in college, or at least those who were weakest to begin with but have gained strength from the training which the college has afforded them.

The contrast of the policy thus suggested with that at present pursued is so strong that the proposition may seem as paradoxical as that of measuring national greatness by ability in mountain-climbing. No one goes to see a game between men who have not reached the highest grade of vigor, no one even invites them upon a team. Even the second group is left to take care of itself, its members being promoted into the first group if they choose to make the necessary effort. It is to the first that public attention is entirely directed. It alone wins honors and brings out applause. That is to say, we have in actual operation a system which trains those who do not need training, and leaves those who do need it to take care of themselves, without even offering them an incentive to improvement. The worst outcome of the policy is not merely waste of effort through exerting it where it is not needed, but the actual discouragement of effort among those who most need to make it. If the discouragement is not a positive one, it is at least a negative factor in that it fails to offer encouragement to the weak to become strong.

That a course of action seemingly adapted to the attainment of an end should really take us farther from it is no new experience in human affairs. The question whether this is true of our present system of intercollegiate athletics is so important as to merit an inquiry how far the contention can be established by independent evidence especially by the opinions of impartial observers. We have two sources of such opinions, the utterances of officers of our universities who have observed the effect of athletics upon their students, and the broader experience of nations. So far as the writer's observation has extended, no college or university authority has claimed, as the result of his own experience, that intercollegiate athletic contests stimulate a personal desire for exercise among that group of students who most need it. For the most part, the opinions not only of administrative officers, but even of teachers of athletics, are toward the opposite view. It is conceded, indeed, that almost the entire body of students, even those least disposed to go through a course of physical training themselves, are much interested in the success of their college team. They enjoy a healthful diversion in witnessing the games. A minority say that they enjoy a certain benefit from this stimulus, although the nature of the benefit is not clearly stated. But no one claims to have seen evidence

that students in the group most in need of exercise have been led to take it in consequence of the athletic contests of their fellows. So far as experience has gone, the opinions based on the best information tend toward the view that the real wants of the weaker group have been lost from sight in the excitement of preparing for and witnessing contests among the stronger ones.

We now invite the reader to take a broader view of the general question how far athletic contests between small groups of men stimulate the love of outdoor exercise in a community. The nation which in recent times has been most actively interested in such contests is, no doubt, the English. When physical training was introduced into our own institutions of learning, our schools borrowed their ideas from Rugby and other English sources, and our universities borrowed from Oxford and Cambridge. That athletic contests were the product of a healthy love of outdoor life among the English people, and not the cause of that love, must be carefully borne in mind. The result is that to-day the two English-speaking countries are the foremost in athletic contests. On the other hand, the semi-professional university athletic teams, so common in our country and, in a less degree, in England, are, so far as the writer is aware, unknown in Germany. It will hardly be maintained that the silly practice of duelling, which has not wholly ceased in some of the German universities, is in any way a substitute for intercollegiate athletic games. In the common schools of the nation, physical training is carefully looked after, but the system is not ours. Those who need the training receive more careful attention and encouragement than those who do not. The whole system is devised and conducted on a rational basis, the end being the physical development of the individual and not the promotion of contests or other games.

It is of interest to inquire what the results of the systems have been in the case of the nations in question. One result to which we invite attention may be only a straw, but it seems very significant. The fondness of the English for feats of physical endurance in mounting difficult Alpine peaks has led us to regard Switzerland as the especial playground of their nation. If this was ever true, it is not true to-day. The fact is that a walker over a snow-covered Alpine pass may now safely use the German language in exchanging greetings with and asking the way of a

fellow pedestrian, with confidence that he will not be going astray one time in five. But, when he reaches the luxurious hotels of the valley, he may with equal confidence use the English language in addressing every fellow guest he meets. That the two systems have produced these two distinctly opposite effects is an actual fact of personal observation. That the professional climber of lofty snow-peaks may be found speaking English as often as German, I cannot either affirm or deny. But, if such is the case, it will only strengthen our contention that the semi-professional physical training to which the English and Americans are addicted benefits the few at the expense of the many who most need it.

If the conclusion to which a careful examination of the case seems to point is really correct, the ideal athletic contest would be one between teams whose members were chosen from men originally of the weakest class. It may well be asked whether an argument in favor of such a system is not futile. We know that no one but the players themselves would take any interest in such games. Then why argue the point? We do not argue it further than to show that intercollegiate contests are worse than useless. If we admit that the policy which supports the system fails of its object because it stimulates effort where no stimulus is necessary, and discourages effort where it is needful, and if, on the other hand, the only reform that will lead to our end is so impracticable as to seem ridiculous, the conclusion is obvious. Physical development on the part of our students will be best promoted by entirely abandoning intercollegiate contests, and making games of strength a purely local and personal affair. In other words, we must train the body on the same system as we do the mind.

Having thus arranged, as we hope, a *modus vivendi* with Ajax by showing how his end can best be attained, let Minerva state her case. The development of intercollegiate athletics during the past twenty years has been so striking that the thoughtful man will inquire into the incentive that lies behind it. It may well be that, in the beginning, this came from a growing conviction of the benefits of physical training to intellectual workers. But it cannot be claimed that a rational conviction of this truth has been a factor in the present expansion of the system. To begin with the first agent: why does the vigorous and healthy student of Harvard or Yale join the athletic team of his insti-

tution, and add to the labor of his studies the large outlay of brain and nerve power required by a course of physical training? Certainly not because he feels that he needs the exercise, for he can supply this in a much easier way and at much less expense to his daily comfort. With him, the motive is the laudable one of commanding the esteem of his fellows and exciting the admiration of the public. For the most part, the game is not a pleasure to him, but a severe strain, which he willingly undergoes in order to gain his end. He is probably among the ablest students of his class; but, if he devoted himself to purely intellectual improvement, he would have to wait long years before getting into the lime-light, while in the athletic team he finds himself there at once. If he is not received at home as was a winner in the Olympian games, he has at least the satisfaction of feeling that his friends and relatives take pride in the qualities he has displayed.

If interest in the contests were confined to students and their relatives, the actual situation would not have presented itself. Its important feature is the extraordinary public interest which the games now excite, and which may be fairly measured by the sums collected from gate-receipts and other sources, the total of which would suffice to pay an important part of the expenses of a university. The income from gate-receipts alone has been so great that the problem how to dispose of it could be solved only by incurring enormous outlays for expenses of all sorts. If we had here a measure of public interest in the physical improvement of students, the situation would at least show one bright side. But it may well be questioned whether this is the case, and whether the real incentive at play is not as old as history,—the love of witnessing a combat. Is it not the same impulse which gave rise to gladiatorial contests in ancient Rome, to the bull-fights of Spain, to the cock-fights of the English, and to the prize-fights of English and American pugilists; and which to-day collects a crowd around two dogs fighting in the street? Is it not that trait of our nature which leads to a personal squabble between two legislators in the parliament of any civilized country being cabled over the world with more promptness than a debate on the most important subjects? Let us not say that it is useless to contend against a trait so widely diffused. In spite of its universality, we all admit, in our sober moments, that the impulse is an

ignoble one. We prohibit prize-fighting by law. A modern gentleman would be ashamed to join a crowd looking at a dog-fight. Whatever the interest he might feel in the contest, his conscience tells him that he can have no rational basis for a desire to witness the scene. The older and wiser he grows the more evident becomes the ignoble character of the impulse. We, descendants of the Puritans, should esteem as a compliment to our forebears rather than a slur upon them, Macaulay's borrowed apothegm—"they opposed bear-baiting not because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators." Their better nature clearly showed them that, apart from the question of cruelty, it was an unworthy trait of our nature which could find enjoyment in the spectacle. The intercollegiate football game gives an air of respectability to a spectacle which we should otherwise regard as undignified. A contest between two teams of professional football-players would be as interesting to witness as one between students. But the veneering of respectability would then be wanting.

Probably the class of thinkers who, while admitting the force of this argument, feel that it is useless to oppose the spirit of the age, may not be a small one. And yet, were we to carry this idea to its extreme, we should do away with one of the great functions of educational institutions—which is to improve the spirit of the age. There is a wide field between the policy of bringing the world at once up to our standards, and leaving it entirely to go its own way. Universities and other academic institutions, being organized to correct what is evil in human impulses and promote what is good, should not assume the position of even passive spectators of a movement which sets their own ideals at naught.

It must be clearly understood that, in all we have said, we keep in mind a comparison between two systems—one devoting itself, in the German fashion, to the comparatively uninteresting task of encouraging the healthy physical development of all students, and the other to the promotion of spectacular games. The difference between these two motives is one that we are bound to recognize in the general interest of morality. It is the difference between loving excellence for its own sake, and loving to excel others. It is like the difference between self-respect as an object in life, and the desire to win the respect and applause of others.

But can we eliminate from the motives to physical training the desire to excel our fellows? In considering this question, let us demur at the outset that a negative answer would not mean that the present system must be supported. We have already shown that the latter does not yield the fruits we have a right to expect. We should therefore abandon it, even if another way could not be found. But we have only to study the facts of the case to show that the better motive is not only worthy to prevail, but may practically be made to prevail. We have only to substitute the man himself as the standard of comparison, instead of the fellow-man.

There still stands in a corner of the Harvard University grounds a small, low, old-fashioned brick building, offering in its proportions a striking contrast to the buildings of to-day. It was the first gymnasium erected for the use of Harvard students. In it those who aimed at increasing the physical strength took as much pleasure in noting their improvement every week as does the football-player of to-day in his contests. This continual gain, coupled with the real pleasure of physical activity, which perhaps many experienced there for the first time, was the sufficient motive to gain the full measure of physical energy attainable by the constitution of each individual student. We never know how interesting the simplest exercise may be unless we have had the experience. I never saw an outing more enjoyed than that of a poor widow of a Tyrolese schoolmaster, who once arranged a picnic for a small party on a slope of one of her native mountains. I could see nothing in it but cooking and eating a meal out-of-doors instead of in the house; but it gave her a pleasure and a distraction which lightened her labors for days to come. In the light of a modern athletic contest, the interest taken by the students of forty years ago in their exercises may seem quite childish. Who but a child could be amused, as students then were, by seeing his fellows lean backward and walk under a barrier slowly lowered day by day until it was little more than knee high? The youth who was looking forward to increasing the weight of his dumb-bells from 60 to 80 pounds, who could walk to the end of a vibrating spar without falling, and who was hoping soon to be able to mount up the peg-studded pole while hanging by his hands, were all interested by the sight of what the others could do in these various lines. It cannot be denied that all

gained the greatest of the benefits that come from physical exercise; and, if we would secure the same advantage to our children, we can do it by inciting them to action on similar lines. Instead of each trying to excel his fellows, which he knows is vain unless he is one of the strongest of the class, each person must try to be stronger to-day than he was yesterday. Even if we cannot move every one by this motive, we shall certainly move more than we do under our present system.

Let us temper a little our admiration for the manly qualities displayed in an athletic contest, by recognizing the confusion between cause and effect which we find involved. Probably nearly all of our readers would share with the writer the pleasure which he would feel in seeing a son win a boat-race. But why? Because the winning made him stronger? No, but because winning proved him to be a strong man to begin with. Success was the effect, not the cause, of strength. The same remark will apply to the manly qualities displayed in an athletic game. Psychologists will tell us that it is very doubtful whether innate qualities can be improved in any great degree in this way. But, apart from this, as we are now in a critical mood, let us inquire whether the manly qualities at play in a contest are really those which the world most needs to-day and will need in the future.

It is a characteristic of human nature that the sentiments and ideas which we inherit from our ancestors may continue through many generations after they have ceased to be needed. It is of especial interest that such sentiments are strongest in the boy, and tend to diminish with age. In former times, cities, villages, nations and empires were so exposed to aggressions from their neighbors that not only their prosperity, but even the lives of their people, depended upon the prowess and courage of their fighting population. Hence arose an admiration for these qualities, which we may expect to continue, not only as long as war is permitted, but even after conditions are so improved that no one will ever be obliged to place himself voluntarily in danger for the benefit of his fellow-men. Every well-endowed boy of to-day admires the brave fighter as the highest type of humanity, and shows his budding patriotism by delighting in the battles which our soldiers have won. But, as he grows up, he is from time to time surprised to find social regulations at seeming variance with his ideas. He learns that the man who jumps off the

Brooklyn Bridge, or risks life and limb otherwise than in the performance of the greatest public or private duty, instead of receiving the reward of a hero is haled before the courts, to be dealt with as an offender against the law. His traditional ideas of the qualities essential in a soldier include readiness to take offence and to engage in mortal combat with his personal enemy. He is therefore surprised when he finds that duelling is prohibited by the regulations governing modern armies, and that the officer of to-day need not be quick of temper to prove his courage. The writer was once told by a distinguished officer of the past generation that it was a disappointment to the average citizen when he first found that the naval officer of our time was an educated gentleman, who did not interlard his conversation with sea slang. As the boy grows to manhood, he finds that fear is strongest in his boyhood and that physical courage is the rule and not the exception among grown men.

In the same category with physical courage we may place readiness to engage in personal combat. The boy who possesses this quality has a decided advantage among his fellows. But, as he grows older, he finds that the requirements of social life render it an undesirable quality among grown men. The boy who is not ready to defend himself is liable to be imposed upon by his fellows. But the grown man trusts for his protection to public opinion and to the agents of the law; and, although the latter may not always be at hand when needed, it is not likely that an occasion will ever arise during his life in which he will have to maintain his rights in the manner employed by primitive mankind. How much soever he would be pleased to down a burglar, he might live through a score of lives without once enjoying the opportunity.

If the argument here submitted is sound, the wisest policy on the part of believers in physical training as a basis of intellectual efficiency is to discourage and, if possible, abolish that special form of intercollegiate contests which has assumed such striking proportions during the past ten years. We should not lose sight of the fact that the energy displayed in these contests is misdirected, and that a wise adaptation of means to ends requires athletic exercises to be a personal matter, in which each individual shall be interested in his own improvement rather than in his ability to outdo his fellows.

SIMON NEWCOMB.